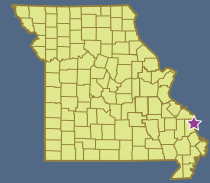


Cape Hills

Conservation Opportunity Area



Ozark
Highlands



American beech, tulip poplar, cucumber magnolia and a luxuriant ground cover occupy this Appalachian Mountain-like forest in the deep, rugged river breaks of Vancill Hollow Natural Area.

Missouri Department of Natural Resources

The Cape Hills Conservation Opportunity Area (COA) borders the Mississippi River near Cape Girardeau. Featuring hardwood forests of white oak, black oak, tulip poplar and hickory, the Cape Hills support a distinctive type of forest found more often in the Appalachian Mountains than in the Ozarks. These forests are characterized by larger trees and a greater diversity of plants. The moist ground is covered with ferns and wildflowers.

Forested natural communities vary from a band of bottomland forests along the river to less fertile chert and limestone forests and woodlands elsewhere. Bottomland forests along the Mississippi River contain large sweet gums and willows but are significantly

fragmented. Northern portions of the Cape Hills include many caves and sinkholes. Other natural features include springs, glades and limestone bluffs.

The Cape Hills COA includes the only population of spring cavefish in Missouri. The Mississippi River provides habitat for rare fish (pallid sturgeon, flathead chubs, blue suckers) as well as imperiled mussels (rock pocketbooks) and big river invertebrates (freshwater shrimp). Sand bar islands are important for nesting interior least terns, a federally endangered bird that relies on sand or gravel islands for protection from predators. The Cape Hills are also essential for populations of forest interior birds, migrating birds and waterfowl of the Mississippi Flyway.

Cape Hills Conservation Strategies

- Conserve forests, woodlands, springs, bottomland forests, canebrakes and wetland features.
- Promote reforestation to provide source habitats for forest interior birds.
- Promote reforestation of Mississippi River floodplains and bottomlands.
- Promote “Best Management Practices” to decrease forest habitat fragmentation, erosion, stream nutrient enrichment and gravel load transport in streams.
- Maintain efforts to eradicate invasive exotic plants and animals.
- Protect existing mussels, native fish and invertebrates.
- Promote the exchange of information through private landowner assistance programs, outreach and education efforts and the Cape Girardeau Conservation Campus Nature Center programming.



Missouri Department of Conservation

Tower Rock is a small limestone island carved by the Mississippi River. It is a designated Missouri Natural Area and National Historic Site.

Priority Research and Inventory Needs

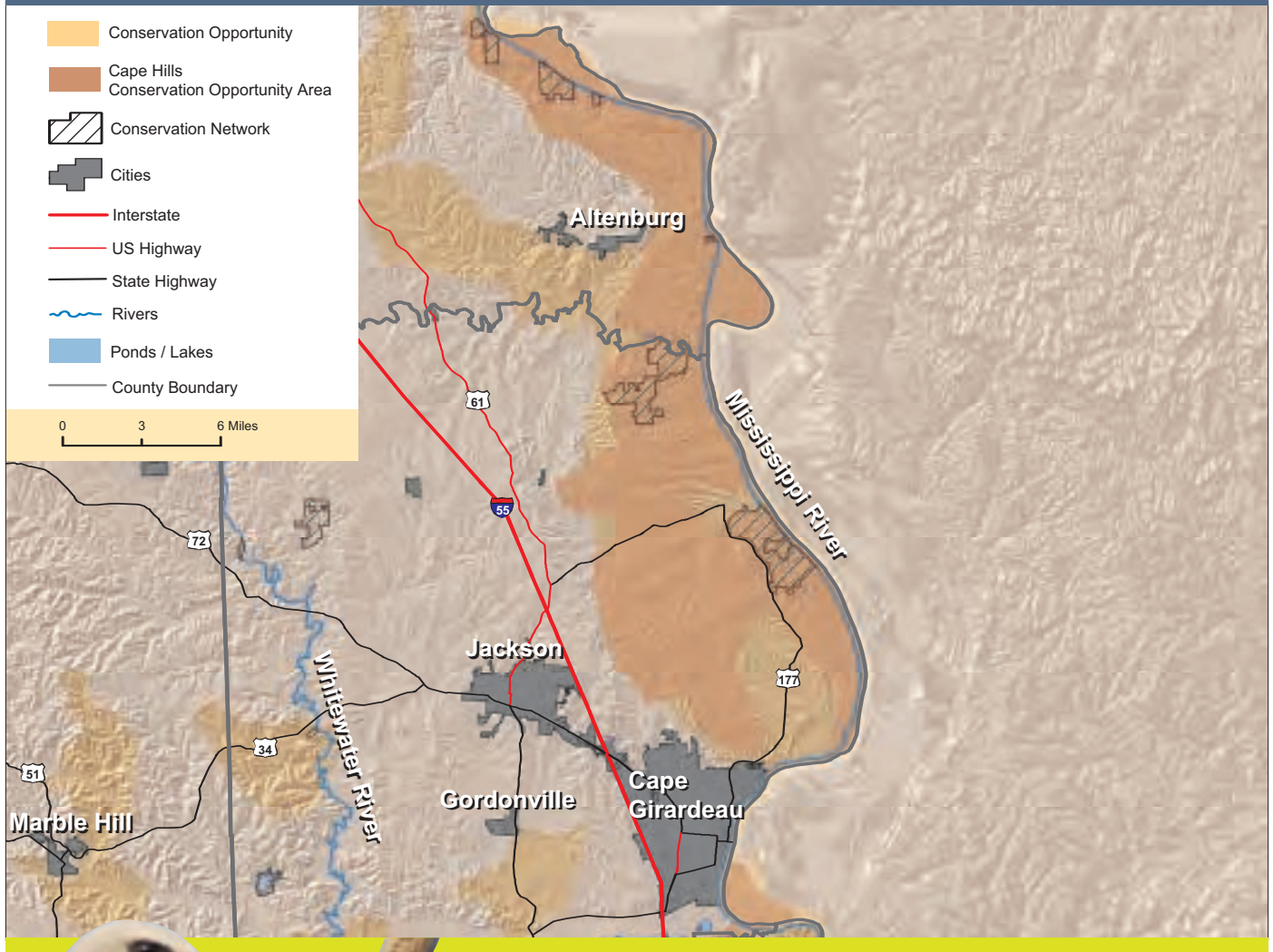
- Monitor the spring cavefish population and water quality within its habitat.
- Monitor interior least tern colonies on Mississippi River islands and sandbars.
- Monitor Mississippi kites.
- Monitor timber rattlesnake populations and determine locations for proper protection.
- Conduct surveys for reptiles and amphibians.
- Continue avian surveys in cooperation with the Four-Season Audubon Society and the Wildlife Society at Southeast Missouri State University.
- Identify and further inventory karst features.
- Monitor canebrake restorations.
- Conduct additional inventories and mapping of species of conservation concern.
- Survey invasive plants and animals.

Conservation Partners

Existing: Four-Seasons Audubon Society; Audubon Missouri; Perryville High School Stream Team; Southeast Missouri State University (SEMO); Missouri Department of Natural Resources (DNR); Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC)

Potential: The Nature Conservancy – Missouri Chapter; Missouri Speleological Society; Central Hardwoods Joint Venture; National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF); Ozark Regional Land Trust; Sierra Club – Ozark Chapter; Little Egypt Grotto; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS); National Resource Conservation Service (NRCS)

Cape Hills Conservation Opportunity Area



Kites are seldom seen perching; they capture most of their prey – insects and small birds – in flight. The

Mississippi kite is a medium-sized, falcon-shaped hawk that is uniformly gray with black wing-tips and a black, unbarred tail. They are rare in Missouri, but do nest in low numbers, mainly in southeastern Missouri along the Mississippi River.

Funding Sources

Existing: DNR annual budget; MDC annual budget; SEMO annual budget; MDC State Wildlife Grants; Soil and Water Conservation Districts State Cost Share Funds; Farm Service Agency Conservation Reserve Program; NRCS Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program; NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program

Promising Future Sources: MDC Landowner Incentive Fund; MDC Wildlife Diversity Fund; USFWS Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program; USFWS North America Wetlands Conservation Act grants; National Fish and Wildlife Foundation grants; NWTF Wild Turkey Super Fund; Missouri Bird Conservation Initiative Grants

Existing Conservation Network

Trail of Tears State Park (Vancill Hollow Natural Area, Indian Creek Wild Area); Apple Creek Conservation Area; Juden Creek Conservation Area; Red Rock Landing Conservation Area; Seventy-Six Conservation Area; Tower Rock Conservation Area and Natural Area; Kelso Sanctuary Natural Area

The Mighty Mississippi



The Big River/Wetlands System Field Station in Cape Girardeau monitors aquatic species associated with the Mississippi River and its floodplain. Ongoing research topics include pallid sturgeons, other rare fishes, mussels and invertebrates.

Jim Rathert, Missouri
Department of Conservation

Conservation Challenges

Threats to the Cape Hills Conservation Opportunity Area include forest fragmentation, urban and industrial development, establishment of populations of exotic plants and animals and

further modification of floodplain and mainstem river systems to the detriment of aquatic species. Additional challenges include streambank erosion and gravel buildup within stream systems.

To learn more about the Cape Hills Conservation Opportunity Area, please contact:



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